

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF DECEMBER 12, 2005**Review of Open Space and Recreation Sub-element**

Jenny Shain, Manager, Parks and Recreation Department, presented the staff report. She said the Draft Sub-element was released for public comment in July 2005. She said the shaded text in the report shows what has been added or changed since it was reviewed by Council in June 2005. She discussed the sections of the sub-element. She noted a correction to the document that states in the main text and is part of a policy on access, that membership is required for participation in activities at the Senior Center. She said beginning in January 2006 that membership will no longer be required and the document is to be modified to reflect that. Public comments that have been received are summarized in Attachment B of the Draft Report to Council (RTC). She noted that several individuals have requested the RTC include the open space acreage at Peterson Middle School that the Santa Clara Unified School District owns and may be declaring as surplus. The issue section now includes a short discussion of the Peterson Field. She also addressed some of the specific issues that Comm. Simons raised during the Study Session on November 28, 2005 related to coordination and linkages with bicycle issues. The following language was proposed to be added to the sub-element report. "Consistent with the way fiscal issues are to be handled in the Fiscal Management Sub-Element, but cross-referenced where appropriate with the Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element, we propose to add language to the Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element referencing the City's adopted bicycle plan and maps. We currently would not propose including bicycle routes – other than where we have off-road trails." It is also proposed to add a policy referencing use of Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) pedestrian guidelines. Also to be added are some bicycle related issues to the internal database to be prioritized for future work efforts, including the idea of prioritizing the top miles of sidewalks and bicycle facilities that are most substandard or missing for access to Parks and Recreation facilities and potential future study in coordination with Public Works of how to better coordinate and collaborate in matters relating to bicycles. Ms. Shain said staff will be sharing this report with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. She said the Planning Commission has several options as they review this sub-element. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend Alternative 1 as shown in the report. Ms. Shain advised the Commission that there are several staff division heads present to help with any questions.

Comm. Simons commented that certain sites in the City such as San Antonio Park that do not have bathroom facilities. He said he would like to see this issue acknowledged in the sub-element if it is a potential issue. Ms. Shain said that the San Antonio Park site and other school sites do not have bathroom facilities. She said it is possible that this issue could come up when doing key initiatives on what amenities belong at each park and each facility. Comm. Simons referred to section E,

page 47, of the Policies section regarding access to facilities and asked if this section would be the appropriate place to add text regarding pedestrian, bike or mass transit support. Ms. Shain said this is a possible section to add the issue. Comm. Simons referred to section B, page 44, of the Policies section regarding programming of Parks and Recreation support. He asked that the second bullet regarding "highlighting cultural practices and traditions..." include text that includes promoting activities that bring together diverse parts of the community to interact with each other. Ms. Shain said this text could be added to the second bullet. **Trudi Ryan**, Planning Officer, said this addition could be included in the motion.

Comm. Sulser asked about the shared field agreements that the City has with the various schools. He said two of the local high schools that we do not seem to have shared field agreements with appear to be near underserved areas. He asked if the City has tried to pursue field agreements with these two high schools. Ms. Shain said she would have to get back the Commission with an answer, but said there is some partnering with Fremont High School with the City for the use of the tennis courts and swimming pool.

Comm. Babcock said this was an excellent report with a lot of information and identifies where there is shortage in open space. Comm. Babcock referred to section B, page 46, regarding prioritization and commented that there are a lot of issues listed as, "Give priority to..." She asked if the next version of this document will identify specific parcels for the areas that have shortages. Ms. Shain referred to the key initiatives in the report and said this is the first effort starting with the properties that the City owns. The second key initiative is to start looking at the areas that are underserved and to look at ways to mitigate the underserved areas. This is the first time the City has provided this type of information in our documents. By including this information it will give us an opportunity to discuss land as opposed to fee.

Chair Hungerford opened the public hearing.

Tap Merrick, a Sunnyvale resident, said that Ms. Shain previously indicated there would be a public comment section in this program and he would like that identified. He said in 1999 the Santa Clara School district previously offered to give Peterson Field to Sunnyvale if Sunnyvale would maintain it and apparently Sunnyvale was not interested. He referred to page 17 of the report and said there has been an 81% decline of undeveloped land in the past 13 years down to about 80 acres. He said that this indicates that Sunnyvale has been giving up land rather than securing land for the neighborhoods to utilize. He commented that he thinks the City should take advantage of purchasing land when it becomes available, like Peterson Field. He said the Middle School could sell off some of the school land if they wanted to. He referred to an article in the Mercury News that said that boys are falling behind in education and he said children are not getting enough exercise. He feels the school district does not support outside activities as much as they used to. Ms. Shain responded to Mr. Merrick's question about the "public comment section" referring to page two of the report beginning with citizen participation and continuing with a

summarization of the comments that have been heard from interested parties and highlights about Peterson Field. She also said that Attachment B of the report contains all comments received from interested parties with the person's name, the issue and the staff response to the issue. Ms. Shain said the information is available on the website.

Denise DeLange, a Sunnyvale resident, said that one of the things that drew her to Sunnyvale years ago was the open space, including the open space at Peterson Field. She said she has been involved with discussions between the school district and the City regarding Peterson Field over the past few years. She commented that she appreciates the report and that the underserved areas need to have more open space. She said open space needs to be valued and the City needs to take opportunities to acquire open space even if it is in an area that is not underserved. She said she understands that the City actually gave the Peterson Field land to the Santa Clara School District and would like to know what the conditions of that transfer were. She said she understands that the City would get the land back from the school district for less than market value.

Ms. Shain commented that the reason staff has not placed Peterson Field as a key initiative is because staff does not see Peterson Field as the highest need. She said staff feels the resources as well as time and money would be better placed in other areas and that the Peterson Field area is one of the best served areas in the City.

Comm. Babcock commented that the report addresses the possibility of congregating all baseball, soccer or football fields into one area. She asked Ms. Shain if the Peterson Field site is being considered as a congregated soccer field. Ms. Shain said that type of decision, unless directed by policy, would be way down the line. Comm. Babcock asked if there was a deadline for the City's discussion with the school district about Peterson Field. Ms. Ryan said there is a process and the school district is currently in the process to determine if the land should be surplus. Ms. Ryan commented about the previous speaker's comments about who owned the land, when and how it was acquired. She said that staff is not in a position to affirm or correct whether what was stated was fact.

David Lewis, Director of the Parks and Recreation Department, said that the City and the school district have had many discussions and that he understands that the school district will be represented at the upcoming Parks and Recreation Commission meeting or Arts Commission meeting. He said he thinks the school district will be formulating a decision regarding the property some time in the late winter or early spring, 2006. He said the school district is hoping to work with the City and is watching the sub-element process to see what the City's position will be. He said there are quarterly meetings between the City and school district administrations and the Peterson Field issue is on the agenda. It is up to the City Council how it views this issue through the sub-element process. The sub-element is scheduled to be presented at the Council meeting on January 24, 2006. Comm. Babcock asked staff if the City ever purchases land and then later decides to sell. Mr. Lewis said there

are fiscal realities to be considered in purchasing land, but it would be prudent to consider all the issues laid out in the sub-element and not just the fiscal realities.

Chair Hungerford commented that it appears the school district is taking a look at how they want to proceed on the land issue, the City is looking at how they want to proceed and at the same time the sub-element is in process. Mr. Lewis said the City is a factor in the school district's decision making, but the school district does have other options if the decisions of the City seem to be moving away from acquiring the land.

Chair Hungerford closed the public hearing.

Comm. Simons moved to adopt the Negative Declaration and approve the revised Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element of the Community Development Element with minor revisions; to modify Attachment B, page 44 under Programming, bullet two to read "highlight cultural practices and traditions reflective of a diverse community and promote activities that bring together diverse parts of the community to interact with each other"; to include staff's modifications as provided in the staff presentation regarding coordination and linkages with bicycle issues. Ms. Ryan said the motion can include that "staff's notes will be reflected in the RTC."

Comm. Babcock asked for clarification. Staff and the Commissioners discussed and clarified the motion. **Comm. Babcock** seconded.

Comm. Simons said he appreciates the hard work that went into this report. He said he knows this will be reviewed by other commissions and that this was a great report.

Comm. Babcock commented that a tremendous amount work by a lot of different divisions went into this report and said staff did an excellent job.

FINAL ACTION:

Comm. Simons made a motion to adopt the Negative Declaration and approve the revised Open Space and Recreation Sub-Element of the Community Development by resolution, with minor revision; to modify Attachment B, page 44 under Programming, bullet two to read "highlight cultural practices and traditions reflective of a diverse community and promote activities that bring together diverse parts of the community to interact with each other"; to include staff's modifications as provided in the staff presentation. **Comm. Babcock** seconded.

Motion carried, 5-0, with Vice Chair Fussell absent.

This item is to be reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Arts Commission and is scheduled to be heard by the City Council on January 24, 2006.